

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

SPECIAL NOTICE

For further information contact:
Telephone Information Center
1-800-647-7706 or (360) 486-2345

Alternate Formats (360) 486-2342
Teletype 1-800-451-7985

Originally Published January 22, 1996—Reissued April 2002

State Requirements of Auto Repair Businesses

In an effort to help communication between auto repair facilities and their customers, the Legislature enacted a law (Chapter 46.71 RCW) governing auto repair businesses. You should familiarize yourself with this chapter of the law if you engage in auto repairing. The following topics are discussed in this law:

Written estimates—Generally, estimates that exceed \$100 must be in writing and must identify the repair facility, the auto owner and the auto. A repair facility that fails to comply with RCW 46.71 is barred from asserting a possessory or chattel lien for the amount of unauthorized parts or labor upon the motor vehicle or component.

A written estimate is not required if the customer's vehicle has been brought to the auto repair facility by another party besides the customer, i.e. towing company, as long as oral authorization is obtained from the customer before repair work is performed. When repair work is based on oral authorization, the repair facility must note on the estimate: the date and time of obtaining such authorization; the additional parts and labor required; the estimated cost of the additional parts and labor (or where collision repairs are involved, after market body parts or nonoriginal equipment manufacturer body parts to be installed); identification of the employee who obtained the oral authorization; and the name and telephone number of the person authorizing the additional costs.

Unauthorized charges—A repair facility may not charge the customer more than 110%, excluding sales tax, of the total shown on the written estimate unless oral or written authorization is obtained from the customer before the work is started.

Repair invoices—In addition to the information required on the estimate, parts and labor provided by a repair facility must be clearly and accurately recorded in writing on an invoice.

Disposition of replaced parts—Except for parts covered by a warranty or parts that must be returned to a distributor, remanufacturer, or rebuilder (which only need to be shown to the customer), the repair facility must return replaced parts to the customer at the time the work is completed if the customer requested the parts at the time he or she authorized the repairs.

(more)

Unlawful acts or practices—Auto repair facilities may not engage in the following: False advertising; materially understating or overstating an estimate; retaining payment from a customer for parts or labor not delivered; unauthorized operation of a customer's vehicle; failing to provide a customer, upon request, any document signed by the customer; retaining duplicate payment from both the customer and the warranty provider; charging for unnecessary repairs.

In addition, the law requires that each auto repair facility post a sign listing the customer rights provided by this law. The Department of Revenue has provided signs to most existing auto repair facilities which meet all of the lettering requirements of the law. New auto repair facilities are provided these signs as part of their tax registration materials. You may obtain additional signs by calling the Department of Revenue's Telephone Information Center at 1-800-647-7706.

This notice is provided annually by the Department of Revenue, as required by RCW 46.71.090, but is not intended to cover all legal implications of the law.

For a brochure regarding the auto repairs act, please call the Washington Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-551-4636.

To inquire about the availability of this document in an alternate format for the visually impaired, please call (360) 486-2342. Teletype (TTY) users please call 1-800-451-7985.